

political
Reports

28 JULY
2021



المعهد المصري للدراسات
EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

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Egypt: GERD Crisis after Security Council.. Alternatives & Options

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Throughout the past period, particularly after the political negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) came to a dead end between Ethiopia, the only beneficiary of the GERD construction, on the one hand, and Egypt and Sudan, the two affected downstream countries, on the other – Egypt and Sudan resorted to the UN Security Council, hoping it could provide a way out of the crisis via practice of pressure to resolve the problem that is likely to have catastrophic consequences on both countries.

Disappointing SC GERD Session

On Thursday, 8 July 2021, the UN Security Council, based on a draft resolution submitted by Tunisia regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, held a session to discuss the repercussions of the dam crisis, which can be summarized as follows:

- The UN Security Council stressed that the dispute can only be resolved through diplomatic means¹.
- Some countries have expressed concern over the growing threatening rhetoric in the GERD crisis, with the Russian Federation at the forefront.
- The US representative to the UN Security Council stressed that Washington believes that “the African Union is the most appropriate venue to address this dispute”.
- The French representative to the UN Security Council expressed his conviction that Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan “should demonstrate the political will to resolve their differences through dialogue, with the support of the African Union...,” praising the African Union’s leadership, by stressing that: “These efforts must continue and be strengthened.” China’s representative said that Beijing is “encouraging them (Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan) to resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation.”

¹ Security Council Calling for Negotiation to Resolve the “Renaissance Dam” Crisis under African Union auspices, Russia Today, 8 July 2021, accessed 9 July 2021, [link](#)

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- In his statement, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry described the problem as a “political” crisis, saying, “The repeated failure of negotiations is not due to lack of scientific legal expertise, but rather to Ethiopian intransigence, Shoukry said, adding “The cause of this crisis is political,” he said. He considered that Ethiopia’s intransigent position has undermined all attempts to reach a political agreement. “Ethiopia refuses to sign a legally binding agreement and has instead proposed to designate the text as mere guidelines and rules.” He called upon the Security Council “to prevent the dam from becoming a threat to Egypt’s existence,” and that it should call on parties to reach an equitable agreement within a defined timeline, recognizing the gravity of the situation and fulfilling its duty to maintain international peace.” Shoukry also said Egypt does not object to Ethiopia's right to benefit from the waters of the Blue Nile, but rather demands that it should respect its international obligations.²

- The statement of Sudanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Mariam Al-Sadiq Al-Mahdi confirmed that “Sudan has supported the dam’s construction from an understanding that its advantages would not be restricted to Ethiopia and that it would operate according to a legally binding agreement that considers the equitable, reasonable use of cross-border resources without inflicting harm on downstream States,” stressing that “Khartoum could ‘in no way’ allow the dam’s filling and operation to be determined unilaterally, as Ethiopia has done,” adding that “the Council must call upon all three States to resume the African Union-led talks, with the involvement of international mediators, to ensure Ethiopia abstains from unilateral moves.”

- The statement of Ethiopian Water, Irrigation and Energy Seleshi Bekele during the session UN Security Council directly objected to the Council considering the matter, saying that “it is unfitting of the Council’s time and resources to hold discussions on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam,” describing the matter as “unprecedented”, adding that the Security Council is a political body concerned with security and that it is not useful to raise a technical issue on it. He regretted that Egypt and Sudan resorted to submitting the GERD file to the Security Council. The Ethiopian Minister of Irrigation considered that the dam would store water in line with what was agreed upon with Egypt and Sudan within the 2015 Declaration of Principles, stressing that “Ethiopia does not respond well

² Sameh Shoukry sends 45 messages to the international community regarding the Renaissance Dam in his statement at the UN Security Council, Al-Ahram Gate, 8 July 2021, accessed 9 July 2021, [link](#)

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to undue political pressure and interference,” adding that “Addis Ababa will continue to negotiate under the auspices of the African Union.”³

That is, the Security Council eventually returned negotiation efforts to the African Union that has failed to find a satisfactory and binding political solution for the three parties over the past years.

After raising the ceiling of ambitions that the Egyptian regime worked on before the Security Council session was held, through political and media statements, the session outcome disappointed the Egyptians, where the Council did not make a decisive decision to preserve Egypt and Sudan's right to life.

Given the complications of the political negotiations and the Egyptian regime's reluctance to carry out a decisive military strike to stop the existential threats to Egypt and to preserve the lives of Egyptians, the Egyptian regime instead resorted to the Security Council in search of international solutions outside the African context that the Ethiopian side insists that any solution must come from.

From my point of view, it was naive for Egypt to go to the UN Security Council, as Ethiopia receives all forms of support from the dominant and controlling powers on those councils (whether the Security Council or the African Union) to complete construction of the GERD. These hegemonic powers have had private agendas in the Arab and African region throughout history and seek by use of all means to control Egypt. Therefore, how come that the Egyptian decision-maker demand that these forces should stand by Egypt, when one of their key interests is to build the dam and control Egypt, and they will never offer anything in Egypt's interest in this regard.

Scenarios and Paths

Based on the current complicated situation that has not changed so much after the UN Security Council's recent session, there are three possible scenarios, as follows:

³ The Renaissance Dam at the Security Council .. Egypt and Sudan demand a binding agreement and the major countries refer the dispute to the African Union, Al Jazeera Net, 8 July 2021, accessed 9 July 2021, [link](#)

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First Scenario: International will to reach a real solution to the crisis

All statements delivered during the UN Security Council session on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam by representatives of almost all countries stressed the need to reach a political agreement that would be satisfactory to the three countries, stressing that carrying out any military action against the dam would threaten African peace, and calling for avoiding such matters. The UN Security Council returned the file again to the African Union for finding a solution to the crisis during the coming period.

The comments of the Egyptian leadership over the past months may have led to hinting at the use of force to solve the problem, amid the recurrent Egyptian military exercises with the Sudanese side within the Sudanese territory, in light of reports from different sources about rumors within the Egyptian army that a military strike on the Renaissance Dam will soon be carried out – all of which may have convinced the international and regional powers that Egypt is about to carry out a military attack on GERD, which is likely to threaten peace on the African continent as well as the interests and influence of those forces there.

Therefore, this may lead those international powers to act seriously to find and impose a peaceful solution that may satisfy the affected parties. In general, the coming days will reveal whether there is a real change in the international situation on this crisis or not.

Second Scenario: A military strike on GERD:

The Egyptian army has the capabilities and potentials to carry out a qualitative military operation against the Renaissance Dam, as we explained before in a previous paper published by the Egyptian Institute for Studies under the title: "[GERD Crisis Military Capabilities and Likely Confrontation](#)"

The Egyptian army has an air combat capability that it can bomb the GERD, using Rafale combat aircraft and MiG combat aircraft, for carrying out such tasks. However, given the factor of the vast distance between the Egyptian bases located in the Egyptian south, it is imperative that Egypt use the Sudanese military bases adjacent to the Ethiopian borders for carrying out such operation.

However, resorting to this scenario was possible before the start of the second filling of the dam reservoir that Ethiopia announced a few days ago and notified the downstream countries, Egypt and Sudan, where the Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohamed Abdel-Aty sent an

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official letter to the Ethiopian minister to inform him of Egypt's categorical rejection for that procedure.⁴

From a military perspective, directing a military strike at that time is likely to cause very serious damage to Sudan in the first place, as Sudan will be exposed to the sinking and destruction of vast areas of its agricultural lands, highly threatening the lives of about 50 million Sudanese citizens. This is likely to prompt Sudan to oppose directing a military strike on the Renaissance Dam at present, even more than Ethiopia that will probably have less damage than that of Sudan.

Third Scenario: Egyptian control over the dam area:

The concrete structure of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is located about 40 km east of Sudan in the Benishangul area, that is now under the administration of the Ethiopian authorities; but, in fact, it is a disputed area between Sudan and Ethiopia, where Sudan is still struggling to restore it, and from time to time military skirmishes erupt between the two Sudanese and Ethiopian armies in that region.

Some countries resort to imposing a fait accompli in order to preserve their national security, after the international community fail to protect their rights, in order to force all powers to find a solution and preserve their rights.

Some believe that the Egyptian regime, in the current situation, has no choice but to adopt this policy, by working to impose the control of the Egyptian forces on the "security-troubled" Benishangul region, where the Renaissance Dam is located, not with the aim of occupation, but to control management of the dam until an binding agreement is reached that would be satisfactory to all parties, and to break the Ethiopian arrogance that does not care about the water rights of Egypt and Sudan, and to force the "complicit" international community to impose a solution to that catastrophic dam that is likely to cause grave damage to the existence of Egypt and the Egyptians.

⁴ GERD second filling.. Social Networking sites are overflowing with rage of Egyptians because of the second phase of filling, hoping for a military solution, Al Jazeera Net, 6 July 2021, accessed 9 July 2021, [link](#)

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In terms of military capabilities and potentials, the Egyptian army has ground forces that enable it to carry out this task, in terms of numbers and equipment, as the Egyptian army has many elite forces, apart from the officers and soldiers of the most numerous infantry within the Egyptian army.

The Egyptian army is one of the most Arab armies that spend much on armament to maintain the Egyptian national security. In case the army fails to carry out such missions to preserve the Egyptian national security, then why this amount of armament on which billions of dollars have been spent?!

Turkey, for instance, has adopted the policy of imposing a "fait accompli" several times to preserve its national security: in Syria, Turkish forces launched the "Operation Euphrates Shield" and the "Operation Olive Branch" to confront Kurdish armed groups that threaten the Turkish national security. In northern Iraq, the Turkish forces carried out several operations to preserve Turkish national security, the latest of which was Operation Claw 2019 against the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Thus, Turkey has imposed a fait accompli on the international community, which has often taken into account nothing but reconciliation without considering the interests of other countries. The international powers could not dissuade Turkey from the steps it took to preserve its national security.

Another example is the Russian Federation, which resorted to this policy (imposing a fait accompli) in imposing its control over the Crimea.

Also, in the October 1973 war, the Egyptian forces followed this policy to liberate Egyptian lands from the Zionist occupation, after which they forced the Zionist occupier to sit at the negotiating table, after breaking its pride and arrogance.

In light of the reality of the current complicated crisis that the GERD file is going through, the intransigence of the internationally supported Ethiopia, and the complicity of international powers in finding a solution to preserve the lives of Egypt and Egyptians, this policy is considered the most appropriate policy for the Egyptian regime to adopt for preserving the Egyptian national security

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Finally,

The recent Security Council session made it clear that international and regional powers do not care about the rights of Egypt and Egyptians. The session also showed that the countries that have domination objectives are seeking to control Egypt. Will the Egyptian leaders continue to follow their resonant statements that have not reached and will never reach a conclusion, then subject the country to the domination of international hegemony powers, or will the regime take the appropriate measures entrusted to it to protect the Egyptian national security?

